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[Medieval Georgia]

THE MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASSES

With the growth of a strong central power and the development of the mediæval administrative machine people began to be distinguished not only by their birth, but also by the service they rendered to the state. *Gwarishvilni* so distinguished became known as *msakhureulni*, which is not to be confused with *msakhurni* mentioned above. A *msakhureuli* (singular) was he who possessed a record of long service to the state. *Msakhureulni gvarishvilni* were thus doubly illustrious by birth and by service.

For a *gwarishvili*, backed by the worth and influence of his *gwari*, it was comparatively easy to enter the administrative service. It was not, however, so easy for the *uqwaroni* or *uaznoni*, who entered upon their career without the advantage of the influence of their *gwari* and all which that implied. The advancement and promotion of an *uqwaro* naturally would not be free of prejudice and unopposed by the *aznaurni*. In such a position undoubtedly were the *msakhurni* of the higher grades. In course of time, however, their personal worth and merit began to be recognized and rewarded. In the work of Juansheri quoted above, it is stated that King Archili "presented Kakheti to his *tadzreulni* and made *aznaurni* of them".[1]

The promotion and elevation of the *msakhurni* became a frequent occurrence in the tenth and the following centuries, and strong kings such as Bagrat III, David Aghmashenebeli and Giorgi III pursued a policy of favouring poor and capable *msakhurni* at the expense of the proud and turbulent *aznaurni*. The preferment of *msakhurni* to *aznaurni* became increasingly common, and in the time of David Aghmashenebeli there was a whole class of *aznaurni* called *aghzeebulni* ("the raised"). Of this type of *aznaurni* may have been the *mosakargaveni* whose duty was the collection of taxes[2] and the *aznaurni sazuerelni*[3] who were in charge of the Customs Houses.

The elevation of *uaznoni* to *aznauroba* led to a new distinction among the *aznaurni*; henceforward the *aznaurni* who were such by the right of birth, *aznauroba* having been handed down to them by their ancestors, began to be known as *aznaurni memamuleni* or *natesavit aznaurni* in contrast to the *aghzeebulni aznaurni*, i.e. "the raised", those who had acquired their *aznauroba* by bestowment.

[1] Juansheri, pp. 209–10.
[2] *Shio Mghvimis Sami Sigeli* (*Three Sigels of Shio Mghvime*), published by S. Kakabadze, p. 5.
[3] *Matiane Kartlisai*, published by E. Taqaishvili, p. 230.

[Medieval Georgia]

THE PEOPLE AND THE POWER

565 Notwithstanding the fact that *aznauri* originally meant "the free", social changes had not spared even the *aznaurni*, and in Merchuli's work we read of *aznaurni mepisai*, that is "king's *aznaurni*"[1]; later monuments show that there were not only the King's *aznaurni* but those of the *eristavt-eristavni* and of other high state officials.

The free *gwariani aznaurni* constituted the influential social class of Georgia. Their material wealth was enormous and some of them possessed even considerable military power; in this respect the *aznaurni*, according to the historian Sumbat Davitisdze, were divided into two groups, namely—to use Sumbat's own words—"some with castle-fortresses and some without".[2] The lords of the castle-fortresses or "the great", as they were called, were those who possessed their own fortresses and were supreme in their respective domains. Each such great *aznauri* also possessed his own *sagwareulo* cemetery, monastery, church and castle-chapel.

565 555 Social differentiation in Georgia had by the eleventh and twelfth centuries become very marked, but social ranks were not divided by insurmountable barriers. A man could be ennobled, he could lose rank through adverse circumstances, or he could be degraded. Descent and social status remained all-important, but individual qualities such as courage, talent and loyal service could raise a man above the class into which he had been born. A person who had distinguished himself by his individual qualities was held in great respect and was, in the words of Merchuli, "an eminent man" (*satchinoi-katsi*). Loyal service was duly rewarded irrespective of birth; persons of long distinguished service received the rank of *msakhureulni*. The fame accruing from this rank reflected not only on him, but also on his whole family. Thus there arose the *msakhureuli sakhli*, analogous to *gwariani sakhli* (the noble house). The *gwariani sakhlni* were very often *msakhureulni-sakhlni* as well. If the dependent *aznaurni* of the great distinguished themselves by service they enhanced their reputation and prestige, and in the eyes of their lords and of their neighbours they became "highly estimable and respected" *aznaurshvilni*. Even the slave-peasants had full scope for improving their lot, and those who showed ability and gifts were not merely common slaves, but *vargi da satsnauri*, that is "good and noteworthy". It is significant in this connection that *varg* in the Svan dialect denotes *aznauri*.

[1] *Tzkhov. Gr. Khumkytlisai*, p. 13, Cap. IX.
[2] *Tzkhovreba da Udzqebo Bagratovanta tskhovr Kartvelta Mepetsa*, p. 339.

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planning without much assistance from labour drawn from the outside. Nevertheless racial intermixture in general and the immigration of Russians in particular increased even in Georgia under the Soviet régime. In 1926 there had been but 3·4 per cent Russians in the country against 8·9 per cent in 1939. On the other hand the percentage of Georgians dropped between the 1926 and 1939 census from 71·5 per cent to 61·4 per cent.

Russian cultural influence in Georgia is, however, much stronger than the percentage of Russians in Georgia's population indicates. In 1947 there were 300 Russian secondary schools in Georgia out of 800 altogether. Kupradze, the Minister of Education of the Georgian S.S.R., himself admitted that more than half of the pupils in Russian schools were non-Russians.[36]

It must be noted in this connection that the standard of education in Georgia is higher than in any other Soviet Republic, including the R.S.F.S.R. Thus in 1939 Georgia had, for every 1,000 inhabitants, 113·4 persons with secondary education and 12·2 persons with higher education. In the Russian Federation, on the eve of the Second World War only 76·8 per 1,000 had secondary education and only 6·5 per 1,000 had higher education. Georgia has also introduced eleven-year secondary education instead of the ten-year school existing everywhere else in the Soviet Union. This comparatively high educational level, combined with a good knowledge of Russian, has enabled the Georgians to play a not unimportant part in the Soviet civil service and in the bureaucratic machinery of the party.

GREATER GEORGIA

During the war the Georgians made a greater contribution to the defence of the U.S.S.R. than most non-Russian peoples. They played an outstanding part in preventing the Germans from penetrating into Transcaucasia. Fighting mostly in separate Georgian regiments and under Georgian officers they held up the German advance at the state borders of Georgia. It was thus a legitimate symbolical recognition of the Georgian war effort that a Georgian sergeant was allowed to hoist the flag of victory over the Berlin Reichstag together with a Russian Red Army man.[37]

The Soviet Government had every interest in advertising the war effort of the Georgians, for Moscow wanted to tell the world that here was a small people who had fought Hitler most heroically. This people must be rewarded at the expense of a neighbour state which had been neutral throughout the war. In other words, Georgia was to be switched into the diplomatic offensive which the Soviet Government launched against Turkey immediately after the end of the Second World War.